

The Empire and Christianity

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was none the more palatable because it was supposed to be a voluntary offering. Any senator, moreover, might be summoned to the capital to serve us pnetor and provide a costly entertainment—a convenient weapon in the hands of autocracy to clip the wings of an obnoxious ex-official. Another ostensibly voluntary contribution to the Emperor was the *aurum coronarium*[^] or its equivalent of a thousand or two thousand pieces of gold, which each city of importance was obliged to off IT to the sovereign on festival occasions, such as the celebration of five or ten complete years of rule. Every five years, also, there was a *lustralis ctillatw* to be paid by all shopkeepers and usurers, according to their means. This was usually spoken of as "the gold-silver" (*c/trj'sargyrum*), and, like ** the senatorial purse/¹ is said by some authorities to have been the invention of Constantinc himself, Zosimus, in a vary bitter attack on the fiscal measures of the Emperor, declares that even the courtesans and the beggars were not exempt from the extortion of the treasury officials, and that whenever the tribute haul to be paid, nothing was heard but groaning and lamentation. The scourge was brought into play for the persuasion of reluctant taxpayers; women were driven to sell their sons, and fathers their daughters. Then there were the *capita-Ifhi human&*, a sort of poll-tax on all labourers; the old five percent, succession duty; an elaborate system of octroi (*/wrier ia*), and many other indirect taxes. We need not, perhaps, believe the very worst pictures of human misery drawn by the historians.